



Clark County Development News

Clark County Community Development

2007 First Quarter



Richard H. Carson
director

Urban holding

The Board of Clark County Commissioners lifted urban holding for nearly 1,900 acres of land in Orchards in the Vancouver urban growth area in April of 2007. The board determined the best way to open the area for development, while meeting the principles of the county's growth management plan, is to require a development agreement with each application. The development agreement assures full urban services are available as an area is developed. Transportation and schools are the services of greatest concern.

The development agreements are the result of several months of negotiation between the county, the Battle Ground School District and individual developers. Several developers worked together to identify and fund an area wide approach.

The agreement breaks new ground. It re-defines the county's expectations in areas without adequate urban services. The county is making sure new development in underserved areas pay a larger share of the cost for new roads and schools.

The developer agreements make the projects different from subdivisions and site plans in other regions of the county. The difference is:

- The timing and size of transportation impact fee payments. The projects pay fees earlier than other projects and pay more impact fees.
- The timing and size of school impact fee payments. The projects pay a portion of the school impact fees earlier and pay more than other projects.
- Agreement for annexation. The projects agree the land may be annexed to a city in the future.

Because of these conditions, the county:

- Has the money to build road capacity more quickly throughout Orchards.
- Has the money to improve roads near and on development sites.
- Collects money for an elementary/middle school site in the Battle Ground School District.
- Shares risk so both the public and private sector make the improvements in a timely manner.

Copies of the development agreements are available from the office of the Board of County Commissioners. If you have questions about the development agreement, then you should call Community Planning at (360) 397-2280 ext. 4558.

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Guest contributor

David Roewe,
Executive Director,
Building Industry
Association

My Thoughts on the Market

Just two short years ago, I watched in amazement as people stood in line for the chance to buy a new home that had not yet started construction. Then the national media made it perfectly clear that there is a downturn in construction, and almost overnight, things slowed down.

What the media didn't finish reporting is that the vast majority of the problem was based in the East and not here in the Northwest. Homebuilding in southwest Washington has slowed very little.

I look at more than just home starts. The supply houses are the true indicators, specifically the lumber yards, carpet centers, glass companies, painting companies and drywallers; the bread and butter of the construction industry. The supply houses are reporting an excellent winter, some breaking records for sales.

Those builders who saw a slowdown went back to remodeling, both residential and commercial. As a matter of fact, commercial construction has been rising non-stop here for more than five years.

Granted, not all has been rosy. The developers and production builders who develop land in anticipation of sales for two to three years into the future saw the market slow down and have not been developing as rapidly.

The BIA Parade of Homes houses from last summer took six to seven months to sell rather than six to seven days, which astonishingly is the same amount of time the homes were on the market in 2002, so the market really just went back to normal.

With the release of Urban Holding, there should be a significant upswing in new construction coming this summer. I anticipate upwards of 1,000 new home starts in the next six months just in the holding zone alone. I guess a good barometer would be to try and have something remodeled, repaired or built new. See how long it will take to find a contractor, or better yet, how soon they can get to it.

The bottom line is that the "sky is falling" mentality of the national media is poorly conceived and poorly researched. But bad news, whether true or not, sells their media.

Real Estate Sales Activity

The "Market Action" report from RMLS shows that at the end of the first quarter the average time a single-family dwelling is for sale in Clark County has increased from 55 days in 2006 to 88 days in 2007. That's a 60 percent increase. In comparison, the average market time in the Portland metro area went from 45 days to 65 days.

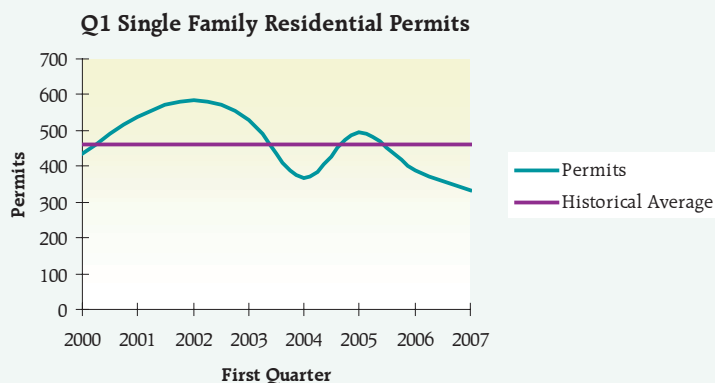
The average sales price in Clark County increased approximately two percent, rising from \$255,000 to \$260,900. The most expensive home prices were in Lake Oswego (\$446,100), Brush Prairie (\$415,100) and North Washington County/Sauvie Island (\$393,000). The least expensive homes were in the N/NE Clark County area (\$178,300).

In-migration

Washington State's Department of Licensing shows that at the end of the first quarter that 3,690 people moved to the county and got a driver's license. Of these, 44 percent came from Oregon (1,617), 17 percent from California (614) and four percent from Arizona (139). This is down 5 percent from 3,904 people who moved here in the first quarter of 2006.

Development Activity

- In the first quarter of 2007, permits for single-family residences remained at their lowest level since 1988, totaling only 333. This represents a 14 percent reduction from the first quarter of 2006 when 389 permits were issued.



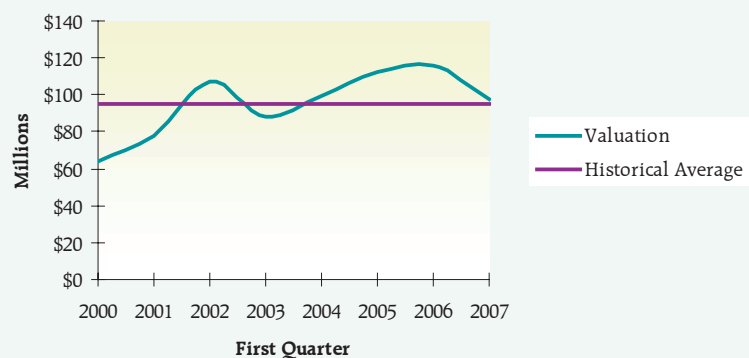
Amboy Middle School



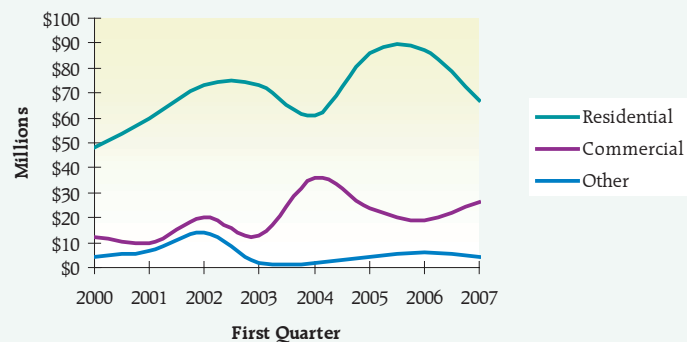
Construction Valuations

- In the first quarter of 2007, overall construction valuation totaled \$98 million, returning to a similar level seen in 2004 before the market peaked in 2005. This is down 16 percent from 2006 when first quarter valuation totaled \$116 million.
- First quarter construction valuation for commercial projects was \$26 million, an increase of 37 percent from 2006 and the second highest total since 2000. Commercial projects represented 69 percent of the total valuation for the first quarter of 2007.
- Residential construction valuation totaled \$67 million. This is a drop of 23 percent when compared to the first quarter of 2006 (\$87 million), yet comparable to the 2004 total of \$61 million.

Q1 Construction Valuation

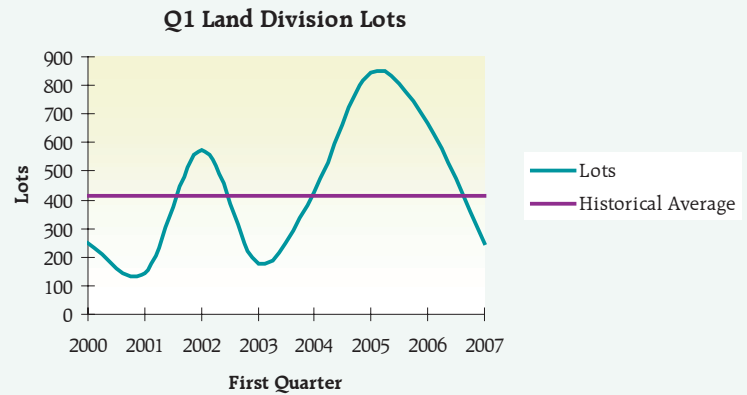


Q1 Construction Valuation Mix



Land Division Lots

- There were 247 land division lots in the first quarter of 2007. This represents a significant drop of 63 percent from the first quarter of 2006 when lots totaled 666.



Development Activity 2000-2007 YTD			
Year	Single Family Residence Permits	Construction Valuation (mil.)	Lots Created
2007 YTD	333	98	247
2006	1551	469	2535
2005	2142	583	2173
2004	2106	533	2241
2003	2157	491	1941
2002	2112	412	1558
2001	2329	417	592
2000	1825	295	972



New East High School

Major projects underway in First Quarter 2007

Residential

Rock Creek Village – 160 multi-family apartment units and 158 single-family attached lots

Sunrise Ridge Townhomes – 42 townhome lots

University Village PUD – 136 lot subdivision including single-family attached units and mixed use commercial buildings

Covington Manor - 66 single-family residential lots

Commercial

Padden Parkway Business Park – 376,750 square foot light industrial/warehouse

Vancouver Toyota – 44,360 square foot building

Schools

Battle Ground School District - K-8 campus on 59.86 acres

WSU Vancouver Undergraduate Classroom Building – 56,000 square foot building

Other news you can use

- [Comprehensive Plan update](#)
- [Salmon Creek development moratorium](#)
- [Clark County development trends](#)



Washington State University -
Vancouver Student Services
Building

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Market Inventory

One of the more obscure market indicators provided to us by RMLS is the Inventory in Months. This is not a real statistic. It's a "what if" statistic. The Inventory in Months tells us how many months worth of housing inventory is available if no new houses were put on the market for sale.

In March 2007, the Clark County Inventory in Months was seven months. This indicator peaked in January 2007 at 9.7 months. The last time we were at seven months was November and December of 2006. The Inventory's lowest point was reached in March-April 2005 (when the real estate market peaked) when we had 1.8 months of inventory.

At the peak of the market, the Inventory in Months was the same for Clark County and the Portland metro area. However, the county's inventory is now seven months compared to 3.8 months in the Portland metro area. This indicates that the real estate sales in the Portland metro area are rebounding faster than in Clark County.

Citizen Survey

The [Clark County Citizen's Survey](#) was first conducted in 2003, and was repeated in 2005 and 2007. The survey asks residents to rate their priorities and satisfaction with the quality of life in the county and local government.

Survey results indicate that the highest priorities for citizens are Growth/Sprawl (20%), followed by Crime (15%), Taxes (13%) and Education (12%). However, Growth/Sprawl is slowly decreasing as a priority issue when compared to surveys done in 2005 (23%) and 2003 (35%).

Housing and Parks have remained the two lowest issues for all three surveys. In general, citizens believe the Quality of Life in the county is good and getting better in each of the surveys. In the 2007 survey, 84 percent felt it was "Good" to "Excellent."

This is the first survey to ask specific questions about Community Development. The survey showed that citizens were positive about fire safety inspections and pet licensing. They were less positive about building inspections and zoning/subdividing of property. Since most of Clark County's citizens have little interaction with the department on development projects, I have to assume that folks are actually more concerned about the overall impacts of building, zoning and subdividing on growth.

Permit Center [wait times](#) now online

Our Permit Centers are highly used community resources and can have extended waits for some services. In order to reduce your wait time, we use an automated system to track when people arrive, when they are helped, and when they are finished with their appointment. We use this data to estimate the current average wait time for each main

category of service we provide. We have also provided some historical data for the last 6 months to help you decide the best time for you to come in for assistance.

Building Safety offers free training on new IRC building codes

The Building Safety division invites you to join them for a free, comprehensive training on the new 2006 International Residential Building Code. Training will be held on May 19 from 8 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. To register contact Michelle Wall at (360) 397-2375 ext. 4088 or e-mail michelle.wall@clark.wa.gov. The Building Safety division also offers free training opportunities on the fourth Wednesday of every month. Visit our [training calendar](#) for a list of future sessions.

Urban Holding update

The county started accepting Urban Holding applications on April 26. As of May 2 we have reviewed 19 applications covering a total of 277 acres that propose 1,451 residential lots.



For an alternate format,
contact the Clark County
ADA Compliance Office.
Phone: (360) 397-2025
TTY: (360) 397-2445
E-mail: ADA@clark.wa.gov

Clark County Community Development

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